

afford strong constitutional protections for freedom of speech, expression, religion and assembly. There is no doubt that there have been instances of human rights violations, especially in areas affected by terrorist activity. Security forces in Jammu and Kashmir and some Indian states in the North-East of the country are primarily involved in combating the depredations of terrorists, who have been recorded as having been involved in grave violations of human rights. Wherever there have been allegations of violations by security forces, they have, on all occasions, been thoroughly investigated and, wherever deemed necessary, have resulted in the severest punishments possible. India has a free press and other media, an independent judiciary and vigilant non-governmental organizations, which are watchful of administrative and legislative actions and exercise the required oversight. In addition, it has a statutory National Human Rights Commission, which has proved vigilant at calling attention to the need to redress grievances, wherever they might occur, including where security forces are involved.

I would like to make one final point. Congressman Towns' remarks appear to be based on material supplied by an organization calling itself the "Council of Khalistan". This organization supports a separatist agenda for the Indian state of Punjab. This organization has no standing in India, not even in Punjab. Even overseas, it is considered a fringe organization and its calls for secession for the Sikhs of India finds no resonance. The recent elections have demonstrated, more than anything else, that minorities in India have faith in the country's pluralistic, democratic system. Indeed, this organization has a questionable reputation on the Hill as well. In early 2002, a representative of this organization misled staffers in some offices to obtain signatures on a letter to the President.

#### A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "BO" MATTHEWS

**HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 18, 2004

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Huntsville, Alabama native, William "Bo" Matthews, for his work helping children in our area build a stronger academic foundation.

Bo was an All-State football player at Butler High School. He went on to earn a football scholarship to play for the University of Colorado, and in 1974, after a successful collegiate career, the San Diego Chargers selected Bo as the overall number two pick in the NFL draft. In 1985, after playing with the Chargers, New York Giants, Miami Dolphins, and the Denver Gold of the USFL, Bo retired from professional football and currently resides in Denver, Colorado.

In October of 2001, Bo formed the Bo Matthews Center for Excellence. The Center, which is located in Huntsville, is dedicated to providing academic instruction and support for students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Their unique approach brings together some of the best practices in effective teaching and student learning.

Mr. Speaker, the Bo Matthews Center is making a difference in the lives of numerous

school children, helping them discover the necessary confidence to be successful in the classroom. In addition, the center is encouraging its students to become lifelong learners and active participants in the community.

On Saturday, June 19th, Bo Matthews will return to North Alabama and will be recognized at the inaugural Community Service Awards Banquet hosted by Conley Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, to welcome Bo back to Huntsville and to thank him for his dedication to our area's children.

#### TRIBUTE TO SIMON AVARA

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 18, 2004

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to a remarkable man from my district. Simon Avara has dedicated many years of his life to the betterment of the Baltimore community. He is an accomplished businessman and friend, as well as my own long-time barber.

In cities and towns across America, barber shops have come to be recognized as familiar gathering places that help create a sense of community. Following in his father's footsteps as a master barber, at the age of 16, Mr. Avara obtained his master license and opened his own shop.

While still a young man, he put his life's dream on hold to serve our Nation during the Korean War. When he returned to Baltimore, he began opening doors for others seeking to pursue a tonsorial profession. He has founded two schools, training a whole new generation of Baltimore barbers.

Today, I am placing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an April 2004 article from *RazorsEdge Magazine* tracing Mr. Avara's career. I am pleased to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Simon Avara, a true pillar of our community.

SIMON AVARA: A CUT ABOVE

(By Rebecca Mein)

"I see a man in a \$600 or \$700 suit dressed real well and he has a bad haircut," says Simon Avara. He pauses and then packs a punch. "It spoils everything!"

After all, that "everything" only costs a man about a six bucks if he visits one of Avara's two Baltimore barber schools for a cut.

This 70-year-old master barber has spent nearly a lifetime communicating that message to clients and customers alike.

He runs the International Academy of Hair Design on Pratt Street in downtown Baltimore and Avara's Academy of Hair Design in Dundalk.

You could say Avara was born into the business. In fact, as a young boy, he never even had to leave his own house to get a sense of what his father did for a living.

Back in the 1930's, he remembers seeing his father's clients show up at he family's front door for a last minute cut.

"The judges would knock on our door on Sunday mornings," he says. They wanted a fresh haircut before heading back to the courtroom on Monday.

Avara's father had his own idea of a barber uniform—a suit, a dress shirt, and a tie.

But back then, Avara had no idea that he would one day follow in his father's footsteps.

Sadly, his father would never live to see his son pick up a pair of shears. The older Avara died tragically in a car accident.

Avara was just 14 years old at the time. Little did he know, that summer, people would start coming to him for a haircut.

It all started when a friend of a friend asked for a trim. Within one year, he went from having no experience and no interest to starting a barber school and landing his first apprenticeship.

Only, his first apprenticeship was not quite the same learning experience that he offers his students today. "In those days, you ran errands," he explains. "They'd let you shave behind the ears. I was persistent. I hung in there."

That persistence paid off after a West Baltimore barber gave him his first break. This is where Avara's story takes an extraordinary turn.

"By the time I was 16, I passed the board and got my master license. I was probably one of the youngest barbers in the state."

At just 16 years old, with one year of high school under his belt and some used equipment in his possession, Avara opened his own shop in a former funeral parlor.

He charged 60 cents for a man's cut and 40 cents for a child. "I was very young when this happened," Avara says. "In everything I've done, I've been blessed."

But then, came another twist of events. During the Korean Conflict, Avara was drafted and had to leave his shop for the service. While in Korea, Avara says he had time to think about what he wanted to do when he returned to Baltimore.

He saw his options as either opening a first class salon or opening a school. "I had trained some people before I went. I felt that then, and I still feel, that if you train them right, a part of you will always live."

When Avara returned to civilian life, he wound up making a third choice. He attended cosmetology school in order to improve his skills when it came to cutting women's hair.

Then, he decided it was time to open his own school. Soon after, came another achievement. He became a member of the Maryland State Board of Barber Examiners at age 26.

While in his early 30's he was elected to be president of the National Barber Examiners.

He also served as secretary treasurer of all union-affiliated barber schools in America. He is currently president and founder of the Maryland Hair Designer's Association.

Avara sees his profession as a way to open doors for people from all walks of life. He believes that with some basic reading and writing skills and people skills, anyone can have a solid future in his field.

"You gotta like people," he says. "If you don't like people, don't even enroll in my school."

Students in his school quickly gain hands-on learning experience. He says by the end of the first week, every student has gotten over the fear of cutting that first head of hair.

As for his students' future job security, Avara has no worries, even as technology continues to take over and take away jobs in other industries.

"We never have to worry that there's a machine that could take our place. You're never going to put your head in a machine and dial the cut."

Today, three of Avara's four adult children are trained in the trade. His youngest son runs his Dundalk School.

Avara makes it a point to tell his students that the leading hair stylists out there are all former barbers. "We really teach them how to cut hair, layer hair, and to do it free-hand. If you want to see a good man's haircut, look at Cary Grant," says Avara.